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The notion of future tense in English: Reflection in grammar books, coursebooks and online sources

Bachelor thesis

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Abstract

The issue whether there is either a genuine grammatical future tense in English or merely various ways of describing future time, none of which can be labelled as a future tense, has been reflected in a great number of grammar books, textbooks and other sources. Yet a complex analysis of the notion of future tense in these resources does not seem to have been realized so far. The aim of the bachelor thesis is to examine how the concept of future tense has been presented in English grammar books, coursebooks and online articles since the late 1970s to the present. Apart from this analysis, the thesis also provides comparison of various theories and opinions found during the research.

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Introduction

The grammar of English includes a great number of phenomena which undoubtedly deserve a careful and thorough analysis. For instance, English grammar is well-known for the use of the definite and indefinite article, the significant role of modal auxiliary verbs or the difference between *to*-inifinitives and *–ing* forms in connection with certain verbs. Nevertheless, one of the most important, interesting and comprehensive issues seems to be that of tense. This area of the English language is rather extensive and there are many other matters connected to it such as aspect and mood.

This bachelor thesis addresses a specific field associated with the issue of the English tense – the question whether there is a grammatical construction which may be called a future tense in modern English. The aim of the thesis is to provide a detailed analysis of various sources which have discussed the existence or non-existence of future tense in English and to find similarities or differences between the proposed arguments. Thus, a better picture of the notion of future tense since the end of the 1970s up to the present will be offered. In addition, the thesis attempts to answer the question which approach towards the existence of future tense seems to be prevailing.

Concerning the content, the first chapter can be seen as the theoretical part of the thesis, for it does not address the issue of future tense as such and focuses on various verbal forms employed for denoting future time in English. Three classification of these forms taken from grammar books are shown and a comparison between them is rendered.

The practical part is divided into four chapters, three of which discuss various grammar books of the English language. It is important to remember that only books written in English have been taken into account. Firstly, those sources which apparently promote the English future tense are analysed. Secondly, a specific category of books which do not seem to take a clear stand concerning future tense is addressed. And finally, grammar books with evidently a negative approach towards any idea of a genuine tense for future time are dealt with. Each of these chapters is concluded with a summary, the aim of which is to point to similar or different opinions among the authors. The last chapter is devoted to other sources discussing the observed issue – specifically to coursebooks of the English language and articles appearing on the Internet.

Despite the fact that such analysis does not seem to have been realized so far, it must be noted that the thesis certainly cannot be viewed as a comprehensive elaboration of the

topic – only a diploma or doctoral thesis with its length could be seen in such a way. This thesis definitely does not address all important grammar books from the last decades, nor does it discuss every Internet article and coursebook relevant to the topic. In addition, other possible sources such as journal articles could not be allowed for due to the length of the thesis. It might also be beneficial to address older sources than those which have been discussed in the thesis. However, I believe that especially the selection of the grammar books is representative enough, so that it will be possible to formulate a meaningful conclusion on the basis of the analysed sources.

1. The notion of future in the English language

1.1 Referential and semantic level of interpretation

The fact that English has employed numerous ways of referring to future time cannot be left unnoticed in any solid grammar book, as this issue is rather comprehensive and vitally important at the same time. Some authors have proposed remarkable notions of various future forms existing in modern English, which surely deserves our attention. However, before such classifications are discussed, an interesting concept related to future time, which can be applied to any language, should be shortly addressed in the first place.

The concept comes from the well-known *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, the authors of which claim that the three levels which are normally associated with the time axis (past, present, future) can be interpreted on two different levels. The first of them is called ***referential*** and its definition is quite straightforward: "... time can be thought of as a line (theoretically, of infinite length) on which is located, as a continuously moving point, the present moment. Anything ahead of the present moment is in the future, and anything behind it is in the past." (Quirk et al., 175) However, since *A Comprehensive Grammar* supports the idea that such a view does not relate well to language and the meaning of verbs, ***semantic*** level of interpretation is offered in order to avoid drawbacks of the referential one. The authors assert that the semantic interpretation, unlike the previous view, allows us to perceive the present in an inclusive way – something can be seen as being present if it exists at the present moment, which includes the possibility that the existence of this thing also stretches into the past and future. (Quirk et al., 175) This notion is demonstrated on the example of the sentence "Paris stands on the River Seine", for it not only describes a present event, but also a state of affairs that has existed for several centuries and may continue for an indefinite period into the future. Thus, it is concluded that on the semantic level of interpretation, "'present' is the most general and unmarked category." (Quirk et al., 175)

The difference between these two levels of interpretation with respect to future time in English (and in any other language) is quite clear, I believe. Whereas the referential approach gives substantial prominence to the future, making it equal to the past and superior to the present, the semantic level of interpretation somewhat pushes future time (along with the past) aside and emphasizes the role of present time. In this case, the future becomes a clearly marked category of the threefold distinction, which was not valid at all for the referential level.

Nevertheless, this brief insight into *A Comprehensive Grammar* was not supposed to diminish the importance of future time and the forms referring to it in the English language – my intention was to point out that apart from the more natural way of perceiving the future within the threefold distinction, there is also a different notion which does not limit the present to a single point, but stretches it into the areas formerly belonging to past and future time.

1.2 Expressions of future time according to Dekeyser and Colen (1979)

Surprisingly, one of the most interesting classifications I have been able to find does not come from a scholarly book of English grammar, but from a Dutch publication intended mainly for learners. This *Foundations of English Grammar* offers a well-done overview of English forms for marking the future with numerous examples and understandable explanations.

The first construction to be found in *Foundations* is labelled as ***the future non-progressive***. It is described as the modal verbs *will/shall* followed by the plain infinitive and it covers especially neutral predictions without attitudinal implications (Dekeyser and Colen, 72), which means that such statements about the future lack a greater amount of subjectivity. Apart from that, three minor uses, which closely relate to the neutral prediction, are differenciated. Firstly, *will* can be used in order to express someone's characteristic behaviour, as in "He will sit there for hours saying nothing." (Dekeyser and Colen, 72) Secondly, *will* is common for describing facts which can be seen as scientific statements such as "Excessive exposure to sunlight will damage a person's skin." (Dekeyser and Colen, 73) And finally, *will* allows speakers of English to express assumption about present states: "He'll be a happy husband now." (Dekeyser and Colen, 73). Employing common sense, we probably would not think of these minor uses as future forms, since they apparently refer to the present rather than to the future. However, the authors offer a suitable explanation for their decision to include this phenomena in expressions of future time: "In each of these examples there is an idea of prediction, not related to the future, but rather to something not directly observable to the speaker." (Dekeyser and Colen, 73) In other words, even though these uses of *will* do not denote the future, they also refer to something which one cannot directly see and there is still an element of prediction, which makes it closely related to the prevailing usage of *will* + bare infinitive. Last but not least, the authors also mention the case when the prediction is

overshadowed by the idea of volition. If, for instance, one says "I'll keep my word", we should speak about ***modal shall/will***." (Dekeyser and Colen, 73)

The second expression of future time, ***the future progressive***, requires *will/shall* followed by the progressive infinitive (*be doing*). According to *Foundations*, there are two common ways of using this conctruction. Firstly, it is possible to employ *will + be doing* when predicting future actions with limited duration. Secondly (and more importantly), *the future progressive* has become the symbol of 'pure' predicition. To be more specific, this particular use suggests that "a predicted event or activity will happen independently on volition or intention." (Dekeyser and Colen, 74) Whereas *will + do* tends to carry a certain amount of volition or intention, the variant with the progressive infinitive can lack any of these. This is demonstrated on an example of two similar sentences – "Will you visit him tomorrow?" is interpreted as a request for a visit, or as a question about someone's intention, while "Will you be visiting him tomorrow?" simply means that the questioner wonders whether the respondent will make a visit. (Dekeyser and Colen, 74)

The future perfect is another form for conveying the future which is proposed by the Dutch authors. It consists of *will/shall* and the perfect inifinitive (*have done*). Again, two uses are clearly distinguished – either describing a state or action that will be completed before a certain point ("In four years' time she wil have completed her university studies."), or making assumption about past time ("You will have heard the terrible news about Mary"). (Dekeyser and Colen, 75)

The following form, which is very rare, is closely connected to the previous one and bears the term ***the future perfect progressive***. It differs from the non-progressive version by employing the perfect progressive infinitive and putting emphasis on limited duration. Therefore, this form can be used in the case of the sentence "In 1980 she will have been living here for a quarter of a century." (Dekeyser and Colen, 75)

The common construction constitued by the semi-modal *be going to* and infinitive carries no particular term in this classification. It is defined as a marker of a future action that is likely to result from an intention which has already been made, as in "What are you going to do next weekend?" (Dekeyser and Colen, 76) The authors also point out that *be going to* is often interchangeble with *will*, but the second verb sounds more natural in the case of spontaneous decisions. (Dekeyser and Colen, 76) In addition, a second use of the *be going to* construction is explained as a prediction combined with the feeling of certainty from the speaker's side, which is further demonstrated on the example of "She's going to faint, get me some water." (Dekeyser and Colen, 77)

The definition of the following form, ***the present progressive***, undoubtedly captures the use of *am/is/are + doing* for future time: "... activities in the near future which are likely to result from a present arrangement." (Dekeyser and Colen, 77) This statement is proven by a short and apt example: "She's getting married next Saturday." (Dekeyser and Colen, 77)

Apart from *be going* to, the authors promote another semi-modal construction for future time – *be to + inifinitive*, the main use of which is for imposed scheduled activities and official arrangments. (Dekeyser and Colen, 78) Besides that, this construction also denotes predestination, which is evident from statements such as "The worst is still to come." (Dekeyser and Colen, 78)

The last construction that we can learn about from *Foundation of English Grammar* is ***the present non-progressive***. This use of the Present Simple tense "combines prediction with absolute certainty about activities or happenings in the future." (Dekeyser and Colen, 79) Therefore, it is quite common for timetables, unalterable plans or arrangments and statements about the calendar such as "Easter falls very early next year." (Dekeyser and Colen, 79)

In addition to this valuable classification, the authors propose ***the scale of futurity*** (Fig. 1) in order to demonstrate to what degree various forms marking the future include the element of prediction one one side and the idea of certainty on the other side. Although it does not necessarily cover every construction mentioned above, it is still very useful for better comprehension of this issue. (Dekeyser and Colen, 79) On the left side of the scale, certainty equals 100 %, thus leaving no space for prediction. It is *the present non-progressive* (A) that surely belongs here. As we move right along the scale, certainty naturally decreases, while prediction becomes more and more prominent. Whereas *the present progressive* and *be to* (B) still include considerably more certainty than prediction, the role of prediction increases in the case of *be going to* (C) and it becomes dominant as we reach the future expressed by *will/shall* which, for that reason, can be thought of as 'pure future'. (Dekeyser and Colen, 79)

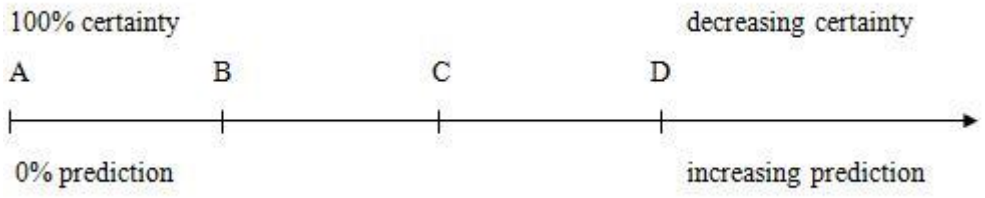

Fig 1. The scale of futurity according to Dekeyser and Colen (79)

1.3 Forms for future time according to Quirk et al. (1986)

The next classification I would like to address appears in the previously mentioned *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. The writers do not aim to discuss all expressions of the future that can be found in English, but rather the most frequent ones. Their contribution is therefore not as extensive as in the previous case, but that does not mean it lacks interesting ideas and observations.

Not surprisingly, the first form mentioned in the overview is *will/shall/'ll* followed by the bare infinitive. The authors claim that the use of *shall* is restricted to the first person futurity, especially in southern standard British English, and assert that "although *shall* and, particularly, *will* are the closest approximations to a colourless, neutral future, they do cover a range of meanings with modal colouring, from prediction to volition..." (Quirk et al., 213) In other words, *will/shall* cannot be viewed as completely neutral markers of future, since even simple prediction includes a certain amount of modality.

The construction *be going to* + infinitive is then addressed as being quite frequent, especially in informal speech. (Quirk et al., 213) The authors distinguish between two specific meanings carried by this expression. Firstly, we can speak of ***future fulfilment of present intention***, the typical features of which are personal subjects and agentive verbs.The typical sentence "When are you going to get married?" demonstrates this perfectly. (Quirk et al., 214) Secondly, *be going to* denotes ***future fulfilment of present cause***. In this case, speakers tend to use both personal and non-personal subjects – the second group is typical for statements such as "It's going to rain." (Quirk et al., 214)

The present progressive is another frequent form for expressing the future according to Quirk et al. Its apt description – *future arising from present arrangment, plan, or programme* – prefigures the fact that if we wish to use this construction, mainly personal subjects ought to be employed. (Quirk et al., 214) Moreover, there is another noteworthy aspect of *am/is/are + doing* for future time – the mentioned event is normally expected to happen imminently, or in a short time, unless this assumption is contradicted by reference to more distant future as can be seen in "I'm leaving the university in two years' time". (Quirk et al., 215)

The simple present, another possible way of denoting the future in English, is considered to be the second most frequent form used for future after *will/shall + inifinitive* due to the fact that this plain construction often appears in dependent clauses which are introduced by conditional or temporal conjunctions. Similarly, *the simple present* also tends to be used in some *that*-clauses. (Quirk et al., 215) The second usage of this structure is not limited to subordinate clauses, as it is typical for timetables or calendar and represents "a

marked future of unusual definiteness, attributing to the future the degree of certainty one normally associates with the present and the past." (Quirk et al., 215)

The last form that is discussed in a greater detail, *will/shall + progressive infinitive*, occurs in two possible contexts once again. Quirk et al. define the first use as ***reference to a future time with the 'temporal frame'***, the example of which is the statement "When you reach the end, I'll be waiting there for you to show you the way." (216) Apart from that, *will* followed by the progressive infinitive can denote ***future as a matter of course***. The true essence of this expression is nicely demonstrated on the example of two sentences that we could possibly hear during a flight in an airplane. If the pilot says "We'll be flying at 30 000 feet", the passengers take this utterance as a signal that this is normal and expected attitude for the flight. If, however, the pilot lets them know that "We'll fly 30 000 feet", the travellers may feel a bit uncomfortable after hearing such a statement, since it probably denotes the fact that due to unexpected circumstances, the airplane will have to fly in a non-standard height. (Quirk et al., 216)

Apart from these most frequent expressions of future time, *A Comprehensive Grammar* briefly addresses less common ways of pointing to the future in English, namely quasi-auxiliary constructions *be to + infinitive* and *be about to + infinitive*. (Quirk et al., 217) Furthermore, it is suggested that the variety of possible verb constructions for future time has not been exhausted, for "futurity is often a secondary connotation of other modals than *will/shall*." (Quirk et al., 217) The best example of this phenonemon is, I believe, the modal verb *may* which often means the same as "possibly will". Apart from modal verbs, Quirk et al. also refer to non-modal verbal constructions with possible future connotations, such as *be sure to, be bound to, hope to* and *intend to*. (218)

1.4 Verb forms for the future according to Huddleston and Pullum (2002)

The last overview of English construction for the future to be taken into account in this part is that of Huddleston and Pullum in *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Since this overview is somewhat scattered along the book and not included in one particular chapter, it may turn out to be more challenging to discuss it in a well-arranged way. Nevertheless, the presented ideas and terminology certainly deserve to be addressed.

In the first place, *The Cambridge Grammar* devotes a great amount of space to the Present Simple tense with future time reference and distinguishes between three major uses. If

the Present Simple for future events may be realized in the main clause, it is called ***the present futurate***. In this case, the clause must involve something which is assumed to be known in the present. (Huddleston and Pullum, 132) The authors promote three distinct uses of *the present futurate*. Firstly, we use this contruction when speaking about cyclic events in the nature, as scientific evidence for future occurence of this phenomena is seen as unquestionable – for instance, "There is a solar eclipse on Sunday." (Huddleston and Pullum, 132) However, weather forecasts usually do not employ this construction – *will* or *going to* is more natural in this context. Secondly, *the present futurate* occurs in the case of scheduled events, i. e. situations arranged or scheduled by humans, which is evident from sentences such as "When do lectures end this year?" (Huddleston and Pullum, 132) Lastly, the main clause of conditional sentences can be realized by *the present futurate*, provided that the consequence of the fulfilled condition is considered already decided or inevitable. For example, when one says "If he doesn't help me, I'm finished", he or she wants to express the idea that nothing can prevent him/her from being finished, if the person mentioned in the subordinate clause does not provide any help. (Huddleston and Pullum, 132)

The second possible way of using the Present Simple for future events is characterized as ***deictic future time in subordinate clauses***. These clauses express possibility, thus not making a future time assertion, and they "do not belong to the futurate construction (...) there is no present element in their meaning and they are not subject to the pragmatic conditions applying to the futurate." (Huddleston and Pullum, 134) *Deictic future* can be found in several types of sentences – temporal constructions (with conjunctions such as *before, when, as soon as, until*), conditional sentences (*if, unless, provided, supposing*), integrated relative clauses ("A prize will be given to everyone who gets the right answer."), embedded interrogative clauses ("Let me know who wins."), certain comparative clauses ("Next time do as he says."), sentences following the verbs *hope*, *bet* and *wager* (although *will + infinitive* is also possible here) and mandative constructions such as "It is essential that he finishes the job tommorow" in which it is possible to replace the Present Simple with subjunctive, or so-called *putative should*. (Huddleston and Pullum, 135)

The last use, labelled as ***future interpretation of a non deictic present tense***, is explained on the example of the statement "If you eat any more you'll say you don't want any more." The verb construction *don't want* refers, without any doubt, to future context. It is included in a dependent clause, yet it cannot be identified with *deictic future time in subordinate clauses*, since in this case the Present Simple expresses an event which happens at the same time as the action described in the matrix clause by the words *You'll say*.

(Huddleston and Pullum, 136) Contrarily, deictic future in dependent clauses denotes possibility rather than simultaneity.

For some reason, other verb variations employed for referring to future time are not discussed as thoroughly as we have seen with the Present Simple. It is hardly surprising that the authors discuss the modal verb *will*, presenting the term ***the futurity will*** and stating that it is "default way of locating the situation in future time." (Huddleston and Pullum, 189) Furthermore, it is asserted that even this *futurity will* incorporates the element of modality, as "our knowledge about the future is inevitably much more limited than our knowledge about the past and the present, and what we say about the future will typically be perceived as having the character of a prediction rather than an unqualified factual assertion." (Huddleston and Pullum, 190) In other words, *futurity will* still retains the status of a modal verb. The verb *shall* is also taken into consideration, but considered as a rather rare alternative for *futurity will*. (Huddleston and Pullum, 195)

The idiomatic construction *be going to + inifinitive* gains only little attention, as its concrete uses are not mentioned and it is merely stated that this form tends to be used in relatively informal style, whereas *futurity will* is neutral, thus appearing in both formal and informal context. (Huddleston and Pullum, 211)

What is more important, Huddleston and Pullum offer a brief list, the aim of which is to demonstrate "a range of constructions which select or permit a future time interpretation." (Huddleston and Pullum, 210) Some of these future time constructions have already been mentioned in *The Cambridge Grammar* in a greater detail, but few of them appear only here (or to be more specific, only here are they characterized as means for denoting the future). The following phenomena appear in the list – mandative clauses, main clause *present futurate* and subordinate present (all of these have been accounted for in the part devoted to the future meaning of the Present Simple), imperative sentences ("Give her my regards.") and also non-finite forms such as bare infinitival ("I may/will see her tomorrow."), to-infinitival ("I intend/want to see her tomorrow.") and gerund participial ("I intend/am seeing her tomorrow.") (Huddleston and Pullum, 210)

1.5 Comparison of the proposed classifications

In order to make the previously discussed notions of English expressions of future time more comprehensible, I will try to compare one to another on the basis of different standpoints. Thus, it will be more evident whether there is any significant agreement or

disagreement between these classifications and whether some constructions appear to be especially stressed.

The first table (Tab. 1) shows that only a few phenomena are discussed in each source we have taken into consideration, namely *will* followed by the bare infinitive, the *be going to* structure and the Present Simple in main clauses. In addition, each book presents the modal verb *shall* as an alternative for *will*, despite its rare use. It seems rather surprising that Huddleston and Pullum do not refer to the Present Progressive, one of rather frequent future forms. However, this is undoubtedly caused by the fact that *The Cambridge Grammar*, unlike *Foundations of English Grammar* and *A Comprehensible Grammar* does not produce a cohesive classification of construction marking future time. Another interesting fact is that only Dekeyser and Colen deal with *will + perfect infinitive/perfect progressive inifinitive*. This construction may not be used frequently, yet its specific use deserves a mention, I believe. It should be also pointed out that as much as the classification by Dekeyser and Colen seems to be the most extensive one, it does not refer to the Present Simple in dependent clauses, despite the fact that this conctruction is used very often for denoting the future.

	Dekeyser, Colen	**Quirk et al.**	**Huddleston, Pullum**
will + infitive	discussed	discussed	discussed
will + progressive inf.	discussed	discussed	omitted
will + perfect infinitive	discussed	omitted	omitted
will + perfect progressive inf.	discussed	omitted	omitted
be going to + inifinitive	discussed	discussed	discussed
the Present Simple (main clause)	discussed	discussed	discussed
the Present Simple (subordinate clause)	omitted	discussed	discussed
the Present Progressive	discussed	discussed	omitted
be to + infinitive	discussed	mentioned	omitted
be about to + infinitive	omitted	mentioned	omitted
be sure to + infinitive	omitted	mentioned	omitted
shall as a 1st person alternative for *will*	discussed	discussed	discussed

Tab. 1. Expressions of future time in selected sources

Surprisingly, there is one significant construction which cannot be found in any source we have come across – the Present Perfect in certain subordinate clauses such as *"When I've phoned Kate, we can have dinner"*, which means that the speaker will firstly make a call and after that there will be dinner. (Murphy, 50) Naturally, the perfect aspect can always be replaced by the simple one in such cases, but that is hardly an appropriate explanation for the fact that this expression of future time seems to be neglected. I personally believe that it is the most remarkable construction used for future time, for the Present Perfect is usually associated with past events related to the present, and yet in this case, it clearly refers to future time with hardly any or no relation to the past or present.

Let us now discuss briefly whether there any similarities in the way certain forms are further divided in the selected sources. For instance, in *Foundations* and *Comprehensive Grammar* the structure *will + be doing* (the future progressive) is said to have two specific uses. The first one is clearly identical in both sources – predicting future actions with limited duration (Dekeyser and Colen, 74) and denoting the future with the temporal frame (Quirk et al., 216) refer to the same context, expressed by sentences such as "When you arrive, I will be cooking." In *Foundations*, the second possible way of employing *the future progressive* is defined as predicting an event or activity that will happen independetly on intention or volition (Dekeyser and Colen, 74), whereas Quirk et al. coin the term *future as a matter of course*, which means that the predicted event will take place in a normal and expected way. Although these two views probably cannot be seen as completely identical, they may undoubtedly overlap in certain cases, since if an action happens in an ordinary way, the role of elements such as volition and intention may be greatly reduced. Below we can see a table (Tab. 2) concerning the subdivision of *will + progressive infinitive*.

	Dekeyser, Colen	**Quirk et al.**
1st use of *will + be doing*	an action with limited duration	an action with limited duration
2nd use of *will + be doing*	"pure future" (a prediction with no intention or volition involved)	"future as a matter of course" (a prediction that something will happen in an expected way)

Tab. 2. Possible uses of *will + progressive infinitive*

The next remarkable divison, which is to be found in the very same sources as in the previous case, is that of *be going to*. Again, two ways of employing this structure are proposed. Firstly, we can use *be going to* in order to denote a future action which results from someone's present intention (Dekeyser and Colen, 76), or in other words, to express future fulfilment of present intention. (Quirk et al., 214) Both sources undoubtedly describe the same phenomenon here. Secondly, this future form can convey a prediction which is combined with the feeling of certainty (Dekeyser and Colen, 77), or it can express future fulfilment of present cause. (Quirk et al., 214) It could be argued that even in this case the proposed uses are identical, as 'feeling of certainty' may be perceived as a present cause. Thus, I do no think there is any major difference in the characterization of *be going to* by Dekeyser and Colen on one side and Quirk et al. on the other side as it is evident from the following table (Tab. 3)

	Dekeyser, Colen	**Quirk et al.**
1st use of *be going to + inf.*	fulfilment of present intention	fulfilment of present intention
2nd use of *be going to + inf.*	fulfilment of present cause	fulfilment of present intention

Tab. 3. Possible uses of *be going to*

The last concstruction we will take a closer look at is the Present Simple. On one hand, the classification concerning this construction appears to be rather simple in Quirk et al.'s approach, for the authors distinguish between the variant used for main clauses (schedules and timetables) and the use typical for subordinate clauses with conditional or temporal conjunctions and the conjunction *that*. (214–215) On the other hand, Huddleston and Pullum promote a more sophisticated division. The Present Simple in main clauses (*the present futurate*) is divided into three categories – timetables/schedules (this corresponds with *Comprehensive Grammar*), cyclic events in the nature and inevitable consequence of fulfilled condition (Huddleston and Pullum, 132) The Present Simple in subordinate clauses may be realized in two distinct ways – either in temporal, conditional, relative, interrogative and *that*-clauses (*deictic future time*), or in specific dependent clauses which describe an event simultaneous with the matrix clause. *Comprehensive Grammar* refers only to temporal, conditional and *that*- sentences and does not mention less common uses appearing in Huddleston and Pullum. The following table (Tab. 4) attempts to capture these differences.

	Huddleston, Pullum	Quirk et al.
1st use of the Present Simple in main clauses	timetables, schedules	timetables, schedules
2nd use of the Present Simple in main clauses	cyclic events in the nature	none
3rd use of the Present Simple in main clauses	inevitable consequence of a fulfilled condition	none
1st use of the Present Simple in subordinate clauses	temporal, conditional, interrogative, relative, *that*-clauses	temporal, conditional , *that*-clauses
2nd use of the Present Simple in subordinate clauses	subordinate clauses simultaneous with the matrix one	none

Tab. 4. Possible uses of the Present Simple for future time

1.6 Expressions of the future in the English language – conclusion

The aim of the previous sections was to present the issue of expressions of future time from different points of view, thus casting light on the fact that the whole topic is quite extensive and open to debate – what one author believes to be a 'future form' may be interpreted otherwise by another scholar.

What has not been mentioned so far is the fact that the phenomenon of denoting future time in English is vitally important for learners of English. One can easily gain the feeling (especially less advanced learners) that anything which lies ahead ought to be realized by *will/shall*, but this is just one of many possibilities. From my experience, Czech learners of English are often aware of the variety of ways that are used for describing past or present events (e. g. *I had done, I had been doing, I did, I was doing, I have done, I have been doing, I do, I am doing...*), but they can hardly ever enumerate expression of future time by heart, although, as has been demonstrated, there is actually a considerable number of them in the English language. This lack of awareness logically leads to errors, the most typical of which (according to my observations) is ignoring the Present Simple in subordinate clauses beginning with *when* – grammatically wrong sentences such as "When I will get home..." can be heard on frequent basis from Czech users of English.

There is another important thing which has not been discussed in a greater detail. Future forms, just as any other grammar issue, can be classified according to the criterion whether they are more typical of formal language, or colloquial English. We have already seen that a higher degree of formality often excludes *be going to*, preferring *will/shall* instead. The *be to + infinitive* construction is also more likely to occur in formal context. Nevertheless, certain constructions can be viewed completely neutral – such is the case of the Present Simple tense in subordinate clauses. Certainly, subordination is more frequent in formal language (Dontcheva-Navrátilová, 54), but especially *when* and *if* clauses (the ones most typical of this use of the Present Simple) are higly frequent even in spoken discourse.

There may be hundreds of other ideas to be shared about the topic of expressing the future in English. However, we will now turn attention towards the key aspect of this thesis and try to find an answer to a burning question – do contemporary scholars mostly assert that one (or more) of the constructions that have been addressed above should be regarded as a proper grammatical tense for future, or is there rather a tendency to reject any notion of future tense as such? Or does the truth lie somewhere in between?

2. Grammar books favouring the existence of a future tense in English

2.1 *Foundations of English Grammar* (1979)

The first book that will be discussed among the sources favouring the notion of future tense has already been addressed in the theoretical part: *Foundation of English Grammar* by Dekeyser and Colen from 1979. Surprisingly, the issue of future tense is not addressed in connection with the classification that has been extensively covered in subchapter 1.3. Instead, this phenomenon is taken into account within an explanation devoted to possible verb forms in the English language.

The authors‘ belief that there are three tenses in English corresponding to three levels of time is evident from the following statement: “When viewing the feature of time, we see that it is a universal concept with three divisions: PAST – PRESENT – FUTURE. English can express this three-term contrast linguistically by means of 3 TENSES…” (Dekeyser and Colen, 50) For each of the time constituents, two examples are offered: *I wrote/was writing* for the past, *I write/am writing* for the present and *I shall write/shall be writing* for future time. Dekeyser and Colen claim that “Each of these verb phrases contains one element that signals time; this is the tense-carrier of the verb phrase: *wrote – was – write – am – shall*.” (50) It is rather unusual that no mention was made of *will* in this case. Therefore, less advanced readers may at this point feel that *shall*, although quite rare in its use and normally restricted to the first person, is the only future tense-carrier in English.

The modal verb *will* is properly taken into account afterwards. It is stated that the three English tenses – past, present and future – can combine with four aspectual contrasts divided into two contrasting pairs: perfective vs. non-perfective and progressive vs. non-progressive. This gives English “a matrix with no fewer than 12 possible verb-forms in English…” (Dekeyser and Colen, 51) Thus the English future tense can appear in four different forms according to the aspect – Future Non-Progressive (*shall/will* + do), Future Progressive (*shall/will* + be doing), Future Perfect (*shall/will* + have done) and Future Perfect Progressive (*shall/will* + have been doing). Naturally, the division concerning the present and past tense is analogous to that of the future tense: Past/Present Non-Progressive (*do/did*), Progressive (*am doing/was doing*), Perfect (*have done/had done*) and Perfect Progressive (*have been doing/had been doing*). On the basis of this classification, Dekeyser and Colen perceive that only two of the twelve proposed verb forms are realized without an auxiliary verb, whereas “the remaining 10 verb-forms are periphrastic and need an auxiliary: *shall/will* are tense-

markers, *have* and *be* are aspect-markers." (53) Here we can clearly see that not only *shall*, but also *will* is considered a marker or carrier of the future tense in English. Although the authors are obviously aware of the fact that a periphrastic construction is needed in order to denote the future, this does not lead them to a conclusion that English has no future tense

To summarize Dekeyser and Colen's point of view – they hold the opinion that English has a future tense which is formed periphrastically by the means of modal verbs *shall* and *will* and can be further marked for non-progressive, progressive, perfect and perfect progressive aspect. Other constructions such as *be going to* or *be to* are never considered as possible tense markers/carriers.

2.2 *A Practical English Grammar* (1980)

In the case of *A Practical English Grammar* from 1980, a mention must firstly be made of *Table of active tenses* which is to a certain extent similar to Dekeyser and Colen's one, but has some notable differences. Thomson and Martinet assert that the future tense is formed by *will/shall* and differenciate between four possible forms. (90) This division is broadly speaking identical to the previous one, but different terminology is used, i. e. simple, continuous, perfect and perfect continuous. Nevertheless, not only does this classification promote the concept of future tense, but the authors also advocate a conditional tense marked by the modal verb *would*. Therefore, the future tense in *A Practical English Grammar* is a part of a fourfold distinction.

The fact that only *will/shall* ought to be considered as a way to indicate the future tense is evident from the following statement: "The future tense is *will/shall* + infinitive, but it is not used nearly as often as students naturally expect. In fact, it is only one of a number of ways of expressing the future." (Thomson and Martinet, 167) However, the authors do not attempt to explain for which reason only *will* and *shall* should hold the status of future tense markers. Such an explanation could have been offered in connection with the idea that the future tense construction is sometimes replacable by *be going to*. (Thomson and Martinet, 177)

Whereas Dekeyser and Colin clearly promoted the notion of one future tense with four aspects, Thomson and Martinet arguably distinguish between four future tenses. For instance, the future continuous is labelled as a tense, which is shown by the statement "This tense is made up of the future tense of *to be* + the present participle." (Thomson and Martinet, 178) Similarly, the term 'future perfect tense' is coined. (Thomson and Martinet, 178) In the case

of the future perfect continuous, the word 'tense' does not appear, but based on the authors' previous claims, there is no reason to believe they do not see this construction as another tense. They probably omitted the word since the formulation "the future perfect continuous" was already long enough.

It is also noteworthy that when discussing differences between *will* followed by the simple infinitive and *will* + be doing, Thomson and Martinet somehow omit the term *future simple* or *future tense* for the first construction, despite the fact that they previously used it on numerous occasions. This is obvious from the words "There is approximately the same difference between *will* + inifinitive and the future continuous as between *will* + infinitive and the present continuous. *Will* + infinitive expresses future with intention. The future continuous expresses future without intention." (180) However, we can hardly assume that a sudden change in terminology may suggest that at one time the authors did not perceive *will* + do as a proper tense. That would be a speculation without any solid evidence. More likely, Thomson and Martinet may have chosen to use "*will* + infinitive" in order not to include the word 'future' too many times in a few sentences, thus avoiding unpleasant repetition.

It appears that *A Practical English Grammar* advocates four possible future tenses in English, each of which is formed by the modal verbs *will* and *shall*. Thus, it is possible to speak of the future simple tense, the future continuous tense, the future perfect tense and the future perfect continuous tense.

2.3 *Longman English Grammar* (1988)

The notion of future tense in *Longman English Grammar* from 1988 does not deserve much attention from the author, so that we will devote only little space to this book. Alexander firstly speaks about *the simple future tense* which "is formed with *will* (...) and the base form of the verb." (178) Nevertheless, that is just one of possible tenses for denoting the future, as *will/shall* for simple prediction can "combine with verbs to form tenses in the ordinary way." (Alexander, 178) These tenses are, apart from simple future, *future progressive*, *future perfect* and *future perfect progressive*, the forms of which are identical to those we have seen in the previous cases. By the words "in the ordinary way" the author surely refers to the fact that the forming of the proposed future tenses is analogous to the way the tenses for the past and present are made.

An interesting fact is that Alexander also proposes the term "the 'going-to'-future", referring to the specific use of this semi-modal construction for upcoming events. (181)

However, there is no indication that the author considers *be going to* as another kind of the English future tense. Therefore, *Longman English Grammar* seems to support the existence of four future tenses formed by *will* or *shall*.

2.4 *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* (1990)

How is the issue of a tense for future time dealt with in *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* from 1990? Again, the author does not provide much explanation, but it is evident that his ideas are coincident with those of Thomson/Martinet and Alexander. Sinclair declares that "If you want to say that something is planned to happen, or that you think it is likely to happen in the future, you use the modal '*will*' in front of the base form of the verb. This is called the future tense." (255) Furthermore, other three future tenses are discussed – *the future continuous tense, the future perfect tense* and *the future perfect continuous* (the word 'tense' is omitted here, similarly to what we could see in the case Thomson and Martinet). I need hardly add that the forms of these tenses are identical to those that have been offered in the above mentioned sources.

It is also pointed out that apart from the future tense use, *will* (and *shall*) can be employed in several ways as modals. (Sinclair, 255) In other words, the author claims that if we use *will/shall* for talking about the future, they ought not to be viewed as modal verbs. When addressing other grammatical ways of indicating the future, such as well-known *be going to*, Sinclair does not refer to any of them as another future tense. Thus, it is possible to conclude that *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* promotes rather a typical scheme of several future tenses in English.

2.5 *Tense and Universal Grammar* (1990)

The title of the next book, *Tense and Universal Grammar*, suggests that this source is likely to discuss the notion of future tense in more detail than in the previous grammar books. First of all, it should be noted that Hornstein bases his views on Reichenbach's theory of tense, according to which we have to take into consideration three elements when defining tenses: time of event (E), time of speech (S) and reference point (R). (18)

During the explanation concerning future tense, the author speaks of the modal veb *will* and promotes the idea that "in one of its guises, it is a future-tense marker." (Hornstein, 38) This theory is further elaborated by the claim "that English has a future tense and that *will* is the morpheme that marks it." (Hornstein, 38) Interestingly, Hornstein does not forget to

address opponents of this approach: “Many linguists have challenged this claim. There have been many attempts to assimilate the future tense in English to a modal. However (...) *will* as future tense acts quite differently from modal *will*. The latter, but not the former, is modifiable by a present-tense adverb such as now...” (38) It appears that the author seperates firmly the modal *will* (such as “The phone is ringing. That’ll be John.”) from *will* that is used when indicating the future, since these two phenomena do not behave in the same way. The fact that Hornstein referred to a completely different point of view than his own should not be left unnoticed, for no other book advocating the existence of future tense has done so.

In addition, the author attempts to prove his assertion by comparing the *will* + have done construction in modal use on one hand and *the future perfect* use (an action which will be completed by certain time) on the other hand. It is pointed out that the tense structure of the future *will have* is S_E_R (which means that we talk about a future event and at the same time refer to a point which is situated in even more distant future), while the structure of the modal *will have* can be depicted by E, R_S (we speak of a past event and refer to a point in time which is simultaneous with this event). (Hornstein, 38) The writer also claims that *the future perfect* is somewhat ambiguous, since sentences such as *“*John will have left the office at 3 P. M.” and “At 3 P. M., John will have left the office” do not make it clear whether the action refers to *before 3,* or *at 3*. (39) By contrast, if the *will have done* structure carries *the modal reading pattern* such as in “John will have finished his thesis yesterday”, there is no ambiguity to be found. The following conclusion serves as another evidence for a future tense in modern English: “This is what we expect if the tense configuration underlying the modal *will have* is similar to the simple past rather than the past perfect or the future perfect. However, this requires separating the future-tense *will* from the modal *will*.” (Hornstein, 39) The message is, I believe, quite clear – two possible uses of *will* are incompatible to such an extent that the non-modal variant ought to be perceived as an indisputable future tense marker.

The theory presented in *Tense and Universal Grammar* is slightly different from what we have encountered so far. Hornstein does not try to provide a comprehensible classification of future tenses. Instead, he spends a great amount of energy persuading the reader that there are actually two *wills* in English, one of which marks a genuine future tense.

2.6 *Grammar in Context* (1992)

The well-known *Grammar in Context* from 1992 is another English grammar book that introduces the concept of an English future tense. Regarding the number of future tenses, Gethin does not differ from the majority of above mentioned classifications, as he states that there are two simple future tenses which he labels as FUTURE (will do) and FUTURE PERFECT **(**will have done) and two progressive ones that are similarly called FUTURE (will be doing) and FUTURE PERFECT **(**will have been doing). (13)

However, before we conclude that *Grammar in Context* proposes four future tenses, it must be noted that the list of progressive tenses includes the *be going to* structure in a separate section (Gethin, 13), which raises a crucial question. What did Gethin mean to say by placing this semi-modal phenomenon among progressive tenses? The most likely explanation is that in his approach, *be going to* forms a special tense which is different from the present, past or future progressive. Otherwise, he would not have put it in a discrete box. Nevertheless, nowhere in the book does the author clarify whether this tense belongs to the set of English future tenses. The sentence that "*going to* can alternate with the future simple tense" (Gethin, 15–16) does not provide much help in this regard. Naturally, seeing this verb as a future tense would be a logical conclusion, since *be going to* marks future time, but as there is no explanation provided, nothing is certain regarding the status of this verbal construction according to Gethin. In addition, it has been shown that the author himself explicitly speaks of future tenses only marked by *will*. Had he perceived *be going to* as a future tense, would he not have mentioned this fact during his explanation of future tenses? All in all, the placement of *be going to* among tenses presents a considerable problem.

A mention must be made of the fact that *Grammar in Context*, unlike the majority of discussed sources, sees future tenses as one of the elements of a fourfold distinction. Thus there are not only past, present and future tenses, but also conditional ones formed by the modal verbs *would* or *should*. Besides that, Gethin indicates that there is a formal relationship between future and conditional tenses in English: "Conditional tenses are formed by the substitution of *would/should* for *will/shall* in the future tenses..." (25) Gethin's approach is therefore quite similar to that in *A Practical English Grammar* – both sources advocate four tenses for future time and on a larger scale, four major groups of tenses (past, present, future and conditional).

2.7 *English Grammar: A Function-Based Introduction* (1993)

The first volume of *English Grammar: A Function-Based Approach* will be the last book addressed in this chapter. Givón is one of the few authors favouring the notion of a future tense who actually attempts to provide a definiton of the word 'tense': "The category tense codes the relation between two points along the ordered linear dimension of time – the time of speech and event time. The time of speech serves as the universal reference-point for event time." (148) These words are supported by a simple diagram (Fig. 2) which demonstrates that the speech time should be seen as a phenomenon which is simultaneous with the present, whereas the past and future are seperated from the moment of the speech by an obvious time gap:

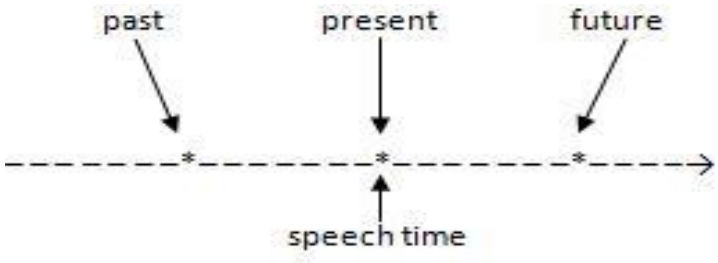

Fig. 2. The relation between tense and time according to Givón (148)

On the basis of this approach, the author distinguishes between four possible tenses in English – past, present, future and habitual. The future one is defined as "an event (or state) whose event-time follows the time of speech." (Givón, 148) The habitual tense, which is responsible for the fact that the future tense in this book is once again an element within a fourfold distinction, is characterized as an event or state which occurs always or is seen as timeless and is therefore mostly realized by the simple form of the verb. (Givón, 148)

Givón claims that the future tense in English can be realized in three different ways: by the modal auxiliary *will*, the complex auxiliary *be going to* (or its contracted form *be gonna*) and the progressive auxiliary *be* + -ing. The author asserts that "the difference in function between the three options for marking the future tense is not easy to characterize, but at least three distinct dimensions seem to be involved..." (Givón, 150) These dimensions are formality of genre (*will* may appear in more formal contexts), time distance (*will* is likely to signal more distant future) and degree of certainty (*be going to* is said to be of lower certainty than *be* + -ing and *will*). (Givón, 150) We can clearly see that Givón, unlike the majority of

future tense proponents, does not refer solely to *will* (or *shall*) as a tense marker, but he also proposes two other constructions that carry future tense.

English Grammar: A Function-Based Approach also deals with the issue of aspect, stating that the progressive and perfect aspect of verbs can combine with tenses. Thus, it is possible to speak of *future progressive* (*will* + be doing) and *future perfect* (*will* + have done). Similarly to Dekeyser and Colen's point of view, Givon probably does not regard these phenomena as distinct future tenses, but as one future tense which can take different forms according to the aspect. It may feel surprising that the combination of perfect and progressive aspect with *will* is not addressed, but that could have been caused by the fact that such a construction appears only rarely in modern English. In any case, it must be pointed out that combining the future tense with aspect is restricted only to *will*, one of the three future tense markers.

Givón's original approach surely deserves a short summary. The author promotes the idea of three future tense carriers, the first of which can further combine with the progressive or perfect aspect. He seems to accept the existence of one future tense, the counterparts of which are the present, past and habitual tense.

2.8 Comparison of the discussed sources

Comparison of the books promoting the notion of future tense will undoubtedly reveal which concepts and ideas tend to appear on a frequent basis and which thoughts are contrarily limited to one or few sources. The following table (Tab. 5) attempts to capture this:

	FT marker	Number of FT	x-fold distinction	Notion of two *wills*	Definition of *tense*	Challenging opponents
Foundations (1979)	*shall/will*	1	3	no	no	no
Practical E. Grammar (1980)	*will/shall*	4	4	no	no	no
Longmann E. Grammar (1988)	*will/shall*	4	3	no	no	no
Collins Cobuild (1990)	*will/shall*	4	3	yes	no	no

Tense and Universal G. (1990)	*will*	?	3	yes	yes	yes
Grammar in Context (1992)	*will, going to (?)*	4 (5?)	4	no	no	no
Function-Based Introduction (1993)	*will, going to, be* + ing	1	4	no	yes	no

Tab. 5. Comparison of the sources discussed in chapter 2

Concerning a future tense marker, only *English Grammar: A Function-Based Approach* openly declares that there are other markers than the modal verbs *will* and *shall*. The majority view among the advocates of the future tense is that *will* (and alternatively *shall*) is the only possible way to form this tense. In the case of *shall*, it is interesting to see that especially more contemporary sources do not discuss this modal which is becoming more and more rare. On the other hand, *Foundations of English Grammar*, a relatively old source, is the only book to place *shall* in front of *will*.

The number of proposed future tenses is mostly four. Although the terminology may differ, these four tenses always correspond to the structures *I will do, I will be doing, I will have done* and *I will have been doing*. A completely different approach can be seen in *Foundations of English Grammar* and *English Grammar: A Function-Based Approach*, the authors of which seem to assert that there is just one tense which can combine with various aspects. The question whether Gethin considers *be going to* as a marker for a fifth future tense remains unanswered, but it is safer to assume that *Grammar in Context* proposes only four tenses.

The tense distinction on a broader level has shown remarkable results. Apart from the present, past and future classification, which appears in each grammar book that has been addressed, three sources add another tense: whereas *A Practical English Grammar* and *Grammar in Context* hold the view that English has a conditional tense, Givón's work promotes the idea of a habitual tense which cannot be found in any other book discussed in the thesis. Whereas Givón actually provides a definition of tense, thus making the reader understand better the proposed classification, the proponents of conditional tense do not seem to define tense as such.

Rather surprisingly, only a few authors supported their view by stressing that the English language has actually two kinds of *will* – the first one for future events and the second one for sentences with modal colouring. Whereas *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* mentioned this idea only fleetingly, *Tense and Universal Grammar* made the best possible use of this idea – Hornstein employed this claim as a key argument for his belief in the existence of an English future tense.

Even more surprising is the fact that although dealing with the issue of tense, hardly anyone tried to explain what the readers should imagine when they come across this term. Only Givón and Hornstein offered their views that were definitely not the same, but included virtually identical terminology such as time of speech, time of event and reference point.

Finally, it is obvious that only the author of *Tense and Universal Grammar* challenged opponents of the future tense, even though he specified neither any scholars, nor any grammar books and articles. Again, this is a little unexpected, as we can suppose that the majority, if not all of these authors knew about the different approach held by many grammarians. Yet with an exception of one person, no one addressed this significant problem. Perhaps some of these authors (if not each of them) felt that a debate concerning the existence or non-existence of future tense would make their contributions less readable and much too theoretical. Or did they feel they could not bring any solid arguments? Unfortunately, we can only speculate where the truth lies.

3. Grammar books with ambiguous approach concerning future tense

3.1 *Current English Grammar* (1984)

The first book with somewhat confusing attitude towards future tense is *Current English Grammar* from 1984. When Chalker deals with the topic of time and tense, it appears that she does not really promote the existence of an English future tense. Let us quote the whole relevant passage:

> Time and tense are not the same thing. 'Time' (consisting of past, present and future) is a concept; 'tense' is a grammatical device. A great deal of confusion is created by text-books that seem to feel that (...) anything before or after needs past or future tenses (...) In English, the present simple is the unmarked tense (...) The past simple, marked usually by inflection, is a marked tense, and is not so much past as non-present. English has no future simple tense, though plenty of ways of talking about future time. (Chalker, 76)

Chalker's criticism of need for future tenses does seem to suggest that the author does not approve of such a term in English grammar at all. Even though the statement about "no future simple tense" may be interpreted as a hint that according to the author there is a complex future tense in English, the truth is that Chalker merely states that her native tongue has a great number of ways of denoting the future. Therefore, she does not explicitly speak of any complex future tenses. To sum it up, the analyzed passage does not appear to favour any notion of future tense.

However, there are places in the book which arguably contradict these claims. When describing numerous forms employed for marking future time, Chalker discusses the modal verbs *will*/*shall* and proposes the idea that "with future reference, this tense is concerned either with 'pure future' and prediction or with volition." (113) One can hardly deny that here the reader is openly told that *will* or *shall* with reference to upcoming events may be called a tense. This is even more evident from the following statement concerning *will/shall be* + -ing: "The progressive tense puts emphasis on the activity rather than on volition, so this form implies a predictable future, perhaps as a background to some other action." (Chalker, 113) The construction *will be doing* is undoubtedly interpreted as a tense, although similarly to the previous case, the author does not explicitly state that it is a future tense. But could it be anything else than future one?

Another rather confusing assertion can be found within explanation regarding several uses of *will*. Chalker claims: "*Will* – with *shall* – is the future tense of traditional grammar.

But *will* is only sometimes a 'pure' future." (121) What does the writer want to say by emphasizing that *will* marks the future tense according to 'traditional grammar'? Does Chalker refer to the fact that other scholars have employed a different approach which says that any concept of future tense ought to be rejected? This is probably the message of Chalker's sentence, but that still does not tell us which of the two opinions the author prefers – does she consider herself to be a 'traditional grammarian', or does she hold the view that *will* is not a future tense marker? I believe it is impossible to give any reliable answer – we have seen that at one time Chalker appeared to reject the idea of future tense, but at another time a completely different approach was obviously employed. Perhaps the author tried to promote the 'modern' point of view at the beginning, but the influence of traditional approach was still so significant that Chalker – whether unintentionally or not – employed its terminology.

3.2 *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar* (1994)

A similar problem as in the previous subchapter arises in *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar* from 1994, which may have been caused by the fact that Sylvia Chalker was one of the authors. The authors state that modern approach rejects the traditional view of the *will/shall* as the future tense and explain that "it is pointed out that strictly English has no future tense as such, but employs various ways of talking about future time." (Chalker and Weiner, 166) However, it is hard to tell to which idea the authors actually incline. When addressing the issue of tense in general, Chalker and Weiner assert that tense is "a form taken by a verb to indicate the time at which the action or state is viewed as occurring; the quality of a verb expressed by this." (395) They continue by claiming that the traditional way of defining tenses in terms of time (past, present, future) may be misleading, but instead of deducing their own conlusion from these ideas, they finally declare: "Some linguists define tense narrowly by form, which gives English only two tenses..." (Chalker and Weiner, 395)

It appears that the authors of *The Oxford Dictionary* somehow attempt not to employ a resolute viewpoint and prefer to refer to 'some linguists' instead. What is more, Chalker and Weiner do not completely reject the idea of *will* being a tense-carrier as can be clearly seen on the example of the *will have done* or future perfect construction where they offer the following definition: "A tense formed with *shall* or *will* + *have* + a past participle, expressing expected completion in the future." (166) Nevertheless, even here they indicate that the tense label is not their idea, which is obvious from the words: "In the traditional labelling of tenses the future perfect simple is exemplified by *I will have wasted the whole morning if they don't*

come soon." This is, I believe, a reference to the fact that it is 'traditional grammar' that perceives *will have done* as a tense.

The provided citations demonstrate that readers of *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar* are not told whether a future tense in English exists or not. The authors do not propose any definitive conclusion and prefer to devote space to both views. Therefore, it is up to the reader to decide which idea to support.

3.3 *A Course Book in English Grammar* (1995)

Let us now examine how the issue of future tense is treated in *A Course Book in English Grammar* from 1995. The sentence "There are only two tenses in English that are marked by the form of the verb – simple past and simple present" (Freeborn, 114) may seem quite clear at first sight, yet it carries a certain amount of ambuguity, as the formulation "tenses in English that are marked by the form of the verb" does not rule out the possibility that English can have a tense which is not realized by verb inflection.

This interpretation is apparently confirmed by Freeborn's subsequent explanation: "We usually refer to the future by using one or other of the set of auxiliary verbs called modal verbs, *will* and *shall* (…) or else by a semi-auxiliary verb like *be to, have to, be going to* (…) Although we use the term 'future tense' to refer to these ways of talking about the future, it is strictly speaking inaccurate, because it is not marked by a change of form of the main verb." (114) The author uses the personal pronoun *we* in connection with employing the term 'future tense' and so the reader may feel as if there is nothing wrong with using this particular term (incidentally, Freeborn refers to other construction than *will*/*shall* as future tense candidates, although the preceding chapter of the thesis has proven that this view is rather rare among scolars). On the other hand, it is stated that due to the lack of inflection, speaking of a future tense is, at least strictly speaking, inaccurate. It is the phrase "strictly speaking" that makes it slightly difficult to understand fully the author's viewpoint. Does Freeborn propose that if we do not limit ourselves by this 'strickly speaking' criterion, we are allowed to see English as a language with a future tense? Especially the use of *we* and also the fact that *future tense* actually appears in the index without quotation marks that would denote its inappropriateness (Freeborn, 331) indicate that *A Course Book in English Grammar* may actually favour future tense. However, since the author clearly speaks of two-tense system on a few occasions, it would be quite doubtful to consider Freeborn an indisputable proponent of the existence of future tense.

3.4 *Practical English Usage* (1995)

The standpoint of Michael Swan in *Practical English Usage* from 1995 poses another interpretative problem. Despite the fact that he never uses the term 'tense' in connection with *will* or other ways of marking future time, it would be inappopriate to call him an obvious future tense opponent, the main reason being the classification of active verb forms which is introduced by the words "This is a list of all the active affirmative forms of an ordinary English verb..." (Swan, 6) Apart from present and past forms (simple, progressive, simple perfect, perfect progressive), the list also includes four future forms which are labelled as *simple future*, *future progressive*, *simple future perfect* and *future perfect progressive*. Not surprisingly, these terms correspond to the structures *will do*, *will be doing*, *will have done* and *will have been doing*. Besides that, the classification covers inifinitives, -ing forms and past participles as other active affirmative forms.

The problem that one can see in Swan's list is simple – the author does not specify the verb *will* as a tense of any kind, yet for some reason he believes that *will* constructions belong to the category of active affirmative forms that English verbs can take. Why does he not mention other modal verbs apart from *will/shall*? What is the reason that the *'ll* verbs deserve to be in the list, whereas the rest of the modal verbs do not appear there? The most likely explanation is that in Swan's opinion, *will* marks the English future tense which can be realized in four different forms according to the aspect. If the author had not perceived *will* in such a way, why would he have included *simple future* and the other constructions in the classification? To put it differently, according to Swam there seems to be something really special about the *will* constructions (otherwise the author would not have placed them next to the eight forms of past and present tense and three non-finite verbal forms) and what else could it be than the fact that *will* marks a genuine future tense?

However, this assumption cannot be verified by anything in *Practical English Usage.* On the contrary, the author later appears to contradict the impression we have drawn from his list. If he really consideres *will* to denote the future tense, why does he never explicitly mention this fact in the parts devoted to the future in the English language? And more importantly, why does he not speak of a future tense, if terms such as 'present' and 'past tense' actually appear in the book? That can be exemplified by the sentence "Often *shall/will* and present tense forms (...) are possible with similar meaning." (Swan, 221)

It therefore seems that Swan avoided the use of the term 'future tense', although the placement of several *will* constructions in the 'affirmative active forms list' suggests that he may have thought of them as a proper future tense. But did he really? Again, it is impossible

to provide any satisfactory conclusion in such a case, as the author apparently promotes two inconsistent ideas at one time.

3.5 Ambiguous sources – conclusion

Grammar books with a more or less ambiguous approach regarding the question of future tense cannot be classified, summarized or compared very easily, as they represent a very specific category. Moreover, the placement of these sources into the group of ambiguous ones is simply my personal interpretation and may certainly be refuted.

The common feature of the analyzed books can be seen in the fact that the authors are, to a certain degree, inconsistent, which means they are not capable of providing an explanation which could offer a clear notion of the existence or non-existence of an English future tense. It is noteworthy that, apart from *Practical English Usage*, each book somehow reflected the difference between the 'traditional' and 'modern' approach, which should not be surprising at all – ambiguous sources seem to have been influenced by both attitudes and can be perceived as 'linkers' between them. However, it is impossible to determine which of the two opinions is prevailing in the case of each source. In any case, it is possible to conclude that although the discussed books did not depart completely from the acceptance of the future tense, they did not promote the existence of such a tense as a clear fact – and this is what makes them significantly different from the previous and following group of grammar books.

4. Grammar books opposing the existence of a future tense in English

4.1 *Introduction to the Grammar of English* (1984)

The first source to be discussed in this chapter is Huddleston's *Introduction to the Grammar of English* from 1984. The author puts a great amount of effort into demonstrating that English does not have any future tense – this issue is addressed on two seperate occasions in the book.

The first mention comes in the part devoted to the English tense system. Huddleston points out that unlike traditional grammarians, he promotes only the past and present tense, as the verb *will* ought not to be analyzed as a tense auxiliary, but as modal one. (133) The author argues that *will* has three distinctive features of modal verbs: it cannot occur in non-finite constructions (sentences such as "I hope to will do better next time" are impossible), there are no contrasting person-number forms (we cannot say "He wills") and the past tense form *would* can appear in the main clause of the second conditional. (Huddleston, 133) Thus the author refers to the fact that *can* and *may* change into *could* and *might* when used in the second conditional. Furthermore, it is stated that *will* combines "with either of the tense inflections, rather than being in paradigmatic contrast with them. The contrast between past tense *could take* and present tense *can take* is paralleled by that between *would take* and *will take*..." (Huddleston, 133) This thought is subsequently developed by the words that "*would* and *will* are analysed as respectively past and present forms of *will* – this is why we say that *will* combines rather than contrasts with the tense inflections." (Huddleston, 133) In other words, the author indicates that *will*, although being used for denoting the future, is itself a present tense form which has a past counterpart (*would*).

Huddleston does not forget to mention that *will take* can often be translated as a future tense in some other languages as can be seen on the example of the Latin verbal form *capiet* that the author perceives as an illustration of a genuine tense for marking future time. However, he asserts that "it is not a valid procedure to analyse forms in one language on the basis of their translation equivalents in another." (Huddleston, 133)

The issue of *will* and future tense is also taken into account when presenting modal verbs. Huddleston tries to prove that *will* belongs with this group not only from the grammatic point of view, but also for semantic reasons, since indicating the future does not necessarily contrast with modality: the meaning of *will* in several of its uses "very clearly involves modality of one kind or another – and even where, with future time, the modality component

is least apparent, there is evidence that it is not entirely lacking (...) it would certainly be impossible to draw any reasonable clear boundary between an allegedly temporal use and the others." (174) It is evident that the notion of two *wills* which was shown in the second chapter is strictly rejected by Huddleston who does not believe there is any border between temporal and modal usage of *will*.

To sum up, Huddleston proposes both syntactic/grammatical and semantic reasons for dismissing the idea of *will* being the English future tense marker, thus setting a theory that his native language does not have any future tense as such.

4.2 *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985)

Arguably one of the most voluminous English grammar books, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* from 1985, discusses the issue of tenses in connection with time. Quirk et al. assert: "... 'present' and 'past' are also interpreted on a grammatical level, in reference to tense. Here, however, the threefold opposition is reduced to two, since morphologically English has no future form of the verb in addition to present and past forms." (176) What is meant by the adverb 'morphologically' is evident from the following passage, which includes criticism of a different approach: "Some grammarians have argued for a third, 'future tense', maintaining that English realizes this tense by use of an auxiliary verb construction (such as *will* + infinitive): but we prefer to follow those grammarians who have treated tense strictly as a category realized by verb inflection." (Quirk et al., 176) 'Morphologically' therefore refers to verb inflection, which, according to Quirk et al., is the essential criterion for the concept of tense. But since English verbs do not inflect in order to mark the future, we should not speak of any future tense and perceive English as a language with a two-tense system. That is the message present in the authors' words.

Nevertheless, Quirk et al. do not deny that there are certain ways of marking future time in English: "... we do not talk about the FUTURE as a formal category: what we do say is that certain grammatical constructions are capable of expressing the semantic category of FUTURE TIME..." (176) Here the reader is informed that tense is a formal category which does not have any notion of the future in English, whereas time can be seen as a semantic category, the future constituent of which is realized by various grammatical means. Therefore, the term 'future time', unlike 'future tense', is perfectly suitable for English grammar.

4.3 *A Communicative Grammar of English* (1994)

The book *A Communicative Grammar of English* from 1994 presents an interesting source for the observed issue – despite the fact that I have not been able to discover any direct mention concerning the topic of future tense, the authors do share their standpoint, although in a rather oblique way.

The book contains a large table, the aim of which is to capture tenses and aspect in the grammar of the English language. (Leech and Svartvik, 80–81) Moreover, the table relates to the concept of time, as the past, present and future are represented there. Since the whole chart is very difficult to reproduce in an appropriate way, it is not depicted in this thesis. This fact, however, ought not to do any harm, as the main point of the table can easily be explained without any illustration. The areas belonging to the present and past time both contain the term 'tense' which is further divided graphically into smaller sections according to aspect (*progressive, perfect, perfect progressive*). It is therefore clear that Leech and Svartvik think of the past and present as phenomena that can be realized by tense/aspect combination in English. On the other hand, the table does not attach any notion of tense to future time. Instead, several possible ways of talking about upcoming events are given there such as *will/shall* followed by the simple, progressive or perfect infinitive, the *be going to* construction and the present simple or progressive. Thus it appears that even though the authors do not propose any real explanation concerning the notion of future tense, their table is meaningful enought to promote openly the view that only the present and past may be rendered by the means of tense, whereas the future can be realized by several different ways, none of which should be regarded as a genuine future tense.

4.4 *A University Course in English Grammar* (1995)

Another book opposing the English future tense is *A University Course in English Grammar* from 1995. At first, Downing and Locke reveal their opinion that one of the reasong for rejecting a future tense is verb inflection, but at the same time a possible counter-argument is proposed: "In accordance with the criterion that tense is a category realised by inflection on the verb, English, strictly speaking, has no Future tense. Against this view it might be argued that, in spoken English at least, the enclitic *'ll* corresponding to *shall* and *will* is very similiar to an inflection." (355) This assertion is very interesting if we take into consideration that none of the books appearing in the second chapter seemed to have held the opinion that the contracted form *'ll* can be viewed as an example of inflection and evidence

for tense. It is not obvious whether it was Downing and Locke that invented this argument, since in no way do the words 'it might be argued' specify the origin of the claim. But given the fact that during the research for this thesis no such statement has been found, it seems likely that the authors of *A University Course in English Grammar* could have truly devised it. After all, there is nothing wrong if scholars formulate a counter-argument against their own theory.

Downing and Locke continue by stressing that the lack of inflection does not matter as much as *form-meaning relationships* which are specified as follows: "... first, *shall* and *will* belong to a set of modal auxiliaries and can express meanings other than reference to future time (...) furthermore, *will* has its own past form *would*; and finally, future time can be referred to by a number of grammatical and lexical forms." (355) Similarly to what we have seen in the case of Huddleston, the authors emphasize the the role of *will* as one of modal verbs and the verb *would* as the past form of it. Apart from that, they refer to the fact that not only *will/shall*, but also other constructions are capable of denoting future time. Thus, it appears that Downing and Locke proposed no less than four arguments for the belief that no future tense occurs in the English language.

4.5 *The Oxford English Grammar* (1996)

Let us now focus on a brief reference to the future tense which is present in Greenbaum's *The Oxford English Grammar* from 1996. The author holds the view that "tense is a grammatical category referring to the location of a situation in time. Strictly speaking, English has only two tenses of the verb – present and past – if tense is defined as being shown by a verb inflection." (Greenbaum, 253) Once again, the relationship between tense and time is explained with the conclusion that there is only a tense for past and present time, but not for the future. Nevertheless, the quoted words are not entirely easy to interpret, for it seems as if the author does not disapprove completely of different opinions concerning the English tense system. This impression is based especially on the words 'if tense is defined as being shown by a verb inflection'. The conjunction 'if' appears to weaken the author's assertion, since it allows the reader to think that there are other possibilities how to define tense in English. In other words, Greenbaum seems to support the idea that tense can be defined by the verb inflection criterion, thus giving only two tenses to modern English grammar, but his words do not make it obvious that this is the only right way to think of this issue. Naturally, we should not doubt about the fact that the author himself does not agree with the opposing approach,

but it is still interesting to see that to a certain extent, he manifests his understanding for different views, although in a rather indirect way.

In addition, it is pointed out that in spite of the existence of only two tenses "English has many ways of referring to past, present, and future time." (Greenbaum, 253) To put it differently, Greenbaum demonstrates that the view that there is merely a past and present tense does not mean English cannot refer to the individual time constituents, including the future, by a great number of grammatical constructions.

4.6 *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (1999)

Let us now move to 1999 when an interesting contribution favouring the non-existence of any future tense was written. It can be found in *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*, the authors of which discuss English tenses in greater detail. According to Biber et al., finite verb phrases in English vary with respect to six major structural distinctions, one of them being tense which is realized in two forms – present and past (*see(s)* vs. *saw*). (452) The authors develop this assertion by claiming that "from a structural point of view, English verbs are inflected for only two tenses: present and past. However, many verb phrases are not marked for tense (...) Beyond that, finite clauses can be marked for either modality or tense, but not both. Thus the presence of a modal verb precludes tense marking (although modal verbs sometimes express time distinctions...)" (Biber et al., 453) It is noteworthy that this view somehow contradicts that of Huddleston from 1984 who believed that *will* and *would* can be labelled as the present and past tense form of one modal verb. Biber et al. promote the idea that phrases consisting of a modal verb should never be perceived as carrying tense distinction. Therefore, although both sources agree that there is no future tense in English, *Longman Student Grammar* does not support the standpoint that *will* and *would* are marked for tense, which nevertheless does not mean that such verbs are not capable of denoting time differences.

Concerning the future tense itself, Biber et al. simply state: "As noted above, there is no formal future tense in English. Instead, future time is typically marked in the verb phrase by modal or semi-modal verbs such as *will, shall, be going to*." (456) Whereas *will* and *shall* do not carry any tense distinction, which is evident from the previous assertions, the authors point out that the construction with *be going to* can actually be marked for tense, as it is not a genuine modal verb. Thus the present tense form *I am going to* can be inflected into the past tense equivalent *I was going to* in order to denote the past. (Biber et al., 456) Although a

similar phenomenon sometimes occurs in the case of *I will* and *I would*, the modality of such phrases, according to Biber et al., prevents us from considering this transformation to be an example of tense inflection. However, the main message of *Longman Grammar* regarding the notion of future tense lies somewhere else – no grammatical construction in English behaves as a future tense marker and therefore the English language has only the past and present tense.

4.7 *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (2002)

Arguably the most comprehensive theory disapproving of future tense which will be addressed in this thesis is that of Huddleston and Pullum in *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* from 2002. It has already been shown that Huddleston offered several arguments in his 1984's book, but in 2002 even more complex explanation was proposed.

Huddleston and Pullum begin their explanation by noting that 'traditional grammar' treats *will* (and *shall* for the first person) "as a future tense auxiliary, proposing a tense system with three terms." (209) Naturally, the writers strictly reject this analysis: "There is no grammatical category that can properly be analysed as a future tense. More particularly we argue that *will* (and likewise *shall*) is an auxiliary of mood, not tense." (Huddleston and Pullum, 209) Subsequently, three major reasons for dismissal of the traditional concept are offered. Firstly, it is argued that the traditional system does not take into consideration the relation between *will* and *would*. The latter is considered the *preterite* (or past) counterpart of the former, which is evident from the fact that *would* appears in all of possible uses of the preterite: past time, backshift (reported speech when *will* changes into *would* is probably meant in this context) and modal remoteness. (Huddleston and Pullum, 209) The authors state that due to this fact, the construction *will take* "does not belong in a one-dimensional system with *took* and *takes*." (Huddleston and Pullum, 209) This one-dimensional system is aptly demonstrated in a simple table (Tab. 6):

PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
took	takes	will take

Tab 6. The traditional tense system according to Huddleston and Pullum (209)

Huddleston and Pullum theorize that even if *will* were accepted as a future tense marker, the traditional notion would still have to be modified in order to take account of *would*. This hypothetical system might look as follows (Tab. 7):

	PAST	PRESENT
NON-FUTURE	took	takes
FUTURE	would take	will take

Tab 7. The hypothetical tense system according to Huddleston and Pullum (209)

As a result, there would be actually four tenses in English: the non-future past (*took*), the non-future present (*take*), the future past (*would take*) and the future present (*will take*). For Huddleston and Pullum, however, this is merely a hypothetical construct, the existence of which the authors do not seem to favour at all. Their goal is simply to point out that accepting *will* as a tense carrier logically means that *would* ought to be viewed as a tense marker, too. Interestingly enough, it has been demonstrated that two authors from the second chapter actually promoted *would* as a tense-marker. However, these scholars spoke of *conditional tense* and did not advocate any 'future past tense' as is suggested here.

The second argument points out that *will* belongs with modal verbs such as *can*, *may* or *must*. These verbs are said to form "a syntactic class whose central members are strongly differentiated from ordinary verbs – and *will* belongs very clearly among these central members." (Huddleston and Pullum, 209) Despite this strong assertion, the authors do not exclude the possibility that the defenders of the future tense could theoretically claim that the verbs *will/shall* constitute a group of *tense/mood auxiliaries*. Nevertheless, it would be up to the proponents of future tense to justify "why *will* (and *shall*) should be differentiated from the others as tense auxiliaries vs mood auxiliaries." (Huddleston and Pullum, 209) The authors evidently see no reason for seperating *will* and *shall* from the rest of the modal verbs and for that reason, these two verbs should be analysed as auxiliaries of mood.

The final reason is that not only does *will* belong with modal verbs grammatically, but also from the semantic point of view. Incidentally, this reasoning has already been addressed in the case of Huddleston's *Introduction to the Grammar of English*. It is asserted that "*will* belongs in the same semantic area as the uncontroversial modal auxiliaries (...) The difference in interpretation between a simple present tense and its counterpart with *will* is to a very large extent a matter of modality." (Huddleston and Pullum, 209) The fact that the use of *will* can denote modality in a significant way is demonstrated on the example of two pairs of

sentences. Firstly, there is the present simple sentence "That is the doctor" which marks present time and its *will*-counterpart "That will be the doctor" does the very same, in no way referring to future. Secondly, the sentence "They meet in the final in May" denotes the future in spite of being realized by the present simple. The counterpart in this context is naturally "They will meet in the final in May." Huddleston and Pullum argue that the difference between the present simple sentences and *will* ones does not lie in distinct time reference, but in different modality – the sentences with *will* are claimed to be epistemically weaker. (209)

Furthermore, it is noted that other auxiliaries "can be used with situations that are in past, present, or future time." (Huddleston and Pullum, 209) In order to prove this, the authors demonstrate that the past, present and future use of *will* in sentences such as "He will have left already", "He will be in Paris now" and "He will see her tomorrow" is analogous to that of the verb *may* – in each of these sentences it is possible to replace *will* with *may*, while the time reference remains the same. (Huddleston and Pullum, 210) Apart from that, Huddleston and Pullum claim that thanks to the potential modifier *now*, *will* (and likewise *may*) should be considered as a present tense form, which is shown by the sentence "Now we will/may not be in time to see the start". (210) It is also argued that the present use of *will* is more visible in dynamic uses such as "I've asked to help me, but he won't." (Huddleston and Pullum, 210)

Let us quote the final thoughts concerning this interesting analysis:

> ... there are languages (such as French) where the translation equivalents do contrast as present vs future tense (...) If one looks at the verbal system of English without any preconception that the tripartite division between past, present, and future will inevitably be reflected in a system of three corresponding tenses, then the evidence is overwhelming for grouping *will*, *shall*, *may*, *can*, *must*, etc., together as auxiliaries of the same kind. (Huddleston and Pullum, 210)

By these words, the authors indicate that it is the preconception of three-tense system, which does exist in some languages, that bears responsibility for wrongful perception of *will* as the English future tense. Moreover, an interesting idea is proposed by stating that *be going to* might be a more suitable future tense candidate for defenders of this notion, since "the subordinate time is always future with *be going*; we have seen that *will* allows other possibilities..." (Huddleston and Pullum, 211)

In short, the main arguments from *The Cambridge Grammar* may have been used in previous sources, but Huddleston and Pullum offered a much more detailed analysis, especially in the case of *would* and the issue of modality. Their book from 2002 may be one with the most extensive criticism of the English future tense that has been published so far.

4.8 *Oxford English Grammar* (2011)

It is time the treatise about opponents of the future tense moved to the recent era – specifically to 2011 when *Oxford English Grammar* was published. As the majority of the discussed sources, the passages devoted to the future tense are relatively short, yet they contain remarkable ideas.

In the chapter called 'Time and Tense', the relationship between these two phenomena is explained. At first, the concept of time is defined as "a real-world notion which we all experience as the hours, days, weeks and years pass (…) we conceive of time as having three 'zones', past, present, and future…" (Aarts, 243) Not surprisingly, the specification of the term 'tense' follows: "... a grammatical system which is used to locate situations in time (…) Languages locate situations in time most commonly by means of verbal inflections." (Aarts, 243–244)

This notion of time and tense allows Aarts to formulate the opinion that there are only two tenses in English grammar: "... inflectional system of tense in English is quite simple in allowing only a present tense and a past tense." (244) Needless to say, it is subsequently emphasized that English lacks any future tense as such: "English has no future tense, because it has no future tense inflections, in the way that many other languages do, nor any other gramatical form or combination of forms that can exclusively be called a future tense." (Aarts, 244) The first reason is quite obvious, the second part of the statement, however, sounds a bit confusing. If the words "nor any other gramatical form or combination of forms that can exclusively be called a future tense" mean that there is no grammatical construction which exclusively points towards the future (no other interpretation comes to my mind), it would be interesting to know what Aarts thinks of *be going to* which, at least in the form of *am/are/is going to*, always seems to denote future time. Nevertheless, it is true that *be going to* is often connected with present intentions and that may have been reason why the author did not think of this construction as 'purely future'.

Similarly to Greenbaum's *The Oxford English Grammar*, the author assures the reader that the absence of future tense does not prevent English speakers from employing various alternative ways of talking about future time, although they are not specified at this point. (Aarts, 244) In conclusion, *Oxford English Grammar* is another book in which the criterion of verbal inflection brings the author to the dismissal of a future tense in English.

4.9 *English Grammar: A Resource Book for Students* (2012)

The last and most recent source to be taken into account is *English Grammar: A Resource Book for Students* from 2012. Berry proposes four various reasons for which it is legitimate to reject the concept of future tense. The first one is concerned with inflection once again: "...tense in English (present/past) is marked by inflections; if we wanted to 'invent' a future tense we would need to take *–ll* and attach it to the end of verbs: *'it rain'll'*" (32) An interesting idea, indeed, but it might lead the reader into thinking that tense inflection is realizable only by adding suffixes, which naturally is not true at all.

The second argument has appeared several times in this chapter: "*will* and *shall* grammatically belong with the modal auxiliaries..." (Berry, 32) Nevertheless, the author speaks merely about the grammatical point of view, not about the semantic one, unlike some other writers who take both levels into account.

The third reason is again aimed at the modal verb *will*: "*will* doesn't always refer to future time, and when it does, there is always another meaning, e. g. prediction, command or promise... " (Berry, 32) Similarly to other authors, Berry thus refers to the belief that there is no strict border between the temporal and modal use of *will*.

The fourth and last reason is the most interesting one, as a similar thought has appeared only in Huddleston and Pullum's book. Berry claims that "though *will* is very frequent, other forms have as good a claim to be a future tense, e. g. *be going to*..." (32) Considering what Berry claims in the case of the third reason, it would actually be more appropriate to speak of *be going to* as a *more suitable* candidate for a future tense than *will*. This construction, as has already been mentioned, always refers to future time, unlike *will*. Berry's conclusion is quite noteworthy, as he indirectly challenges potential proponents of both future and conditional tense: "... if *will* is not a marker of the future tense, then *would* is not a marker of a conditional tense. So what we are left with is two tenses: past and present." (33)

All in all, it is evident that Berry belongs with the authors who try to set more than one major reason for dismissing the notion of future tense. Although none of the arguments is completely original, Berry's explanation seems to be one of the most developed we have come across.

4.10 Comparison of the examined sources

As with the defenders of future tense, the books disapproving of the notion of such tense will be compared (Tab. 8). We shall mostly focus on various arguments against future tense which have been discovered in the discussed sources.

	Tense inflection	*Will* as a modal verb	*Would* as a past form	Other ways than *will*	Definition of *tense*	Challenging opponents
Introduction (1984)	no	yes	yes	no	no	yes
Comprehensive Grammar (1985)	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes
Communicative Grammar (1994)	no	no	no	no	no	no
University Course (1995)	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Oxford English G. (1996)	yes	no	no	no	yes	no
Longman Grammar (1999)	yes	no	no	no	no	no
Cambridge Grammar (2002)	no	yes	yes	no	no	yes
Oxford English G. (2011)	yes	no	no	no	yes	no
Resource Book (2012)	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no

Tab 8. Comparison of sources discussed in chapter 4

The most common argument was the idea that due to the lack of an inflected verb form for future time, English has no future tense. It appears in the majority of sources and is omitted only in *A Communicative Grammar of English* (however, this book is rather specific, as it refutes future tense in an indirect way and thus there are no real arguments) and in the books which were written or co-written by Rodney Huddleston, for this scholar seems to be mostly interested in properties of *will* rather than in the issue of inflection. It seems that, apart

from Downing and Locke, each author taking inflection into account treated this phenomenon as a crucial piece of evidence for their approach.

Will as a modal verb, not a tense auxiliary, represents another frequent argument among critics of future tense – it was presented in four books. Moreover, it is important to note that a few sources (namely both of Huddleston's books) divided this issue into two seperate areas, i. e. the grammatical/syntactic and semantic point of view. Whereas the first one is concerned with such properties as no *–s* ending for the third person, the second viewpoint addresses the fact that modality and temporality are closely related and cannot be seperated easily. In connection with this criterion, Downing/Locke, Huddleston/Pullum and Berry emphasize that not always does *will* refer to future time.

Introduction to the Grammar of English and *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* share another argument against future tense – both of them point out that the modal verb *would* is the past form of *will*. The only other book to refer to this phenomenon is Downing and Locke's *A University Course in English Grammar*. Especially *The Cambridge Grammar* appears to be very much concerned with the *will-would* relationship and attempts to demonstrate that if we are to treat *will* as a tense marker, the same must be done with *would*. It has been pointed out that whereas Huddleston and Pullum consider *will* and *would* as the present tense form and past tense form respectively, Biber et al. do not perceive modal verbs as tense-carriers. *Would* as the past form of *will* therefore does not play any role in *Longman Grammar.*

The fact that the concept of future tense is problematic due to the existence of other 'future time' constructions than *will* was mentioned in only two sources.Whereas Downing and Locke did not develop this thought, Berry in *English Grammar: A Resource Book* claimed that if *will* has right to be a future tense marker, the other constructions should be treated in the very same way.

Apart from arguments serving as evidence against any notion of future tense, we should also be interested in some other aspects. For instance, how often did the authors decide to define the concept of tense? It has been shown that in the case of advocates of future tense, there were not many scholars to do so. The results in this chapter are more positive, since tense seems to have been defined in five out of nine books. The majority of definitons can be regarded as rather simple, but quite a complex one was offered in Aart's *Oxford English Grammar*.

Surprisingly, challenging opponents was something to which only a few authors inclined. The most interesting fact, however, is the tendency not to mention any concrete

source or author and to be content with phrases such as ‘traditional grammar/grammarians’ (in the case of Huddleston’s books) or ‘some grammarians’ (Quirk et al. in *A Comprehensive Grammar*). Surely, we have seen that such authors do exist, but the quoted phrases do not refer to any of them. A reader who does not have a bigger picture of this issue may therefore be left with a feeling that Huddleston and Quirk speak of something which exists only in their minds, as they do not give any concrete example. However, I believe that the majority of readers will have encountered the traditional approach in one or more sources and therefore they are likely to know what Quirk and Huddleston meant by their words.

Last of all, one cannot deny that when any of the discussed books tried to reject a concept of future tense, the aim was to discuss the modal verb *will*. There was simply no tendency to dismiss *be going to*, *be about to* or *be to* as carriers of future tense. Naturally, this is quite understandable – the second chapter has proven beyond reasonable doubt that scarcely do defenders of future tense consider anything else but *will* (and *shall*) to mark future tense.

5. The future tense in other types of sources

5.1 The notion of future tense in selected English coursebooks

The aim of the section is to show how future tense is interpreted in certain coursebooks of the English language. Altogether five sources intended for upper-intermediate pupils or students will be taken into consideration, which could give us a better idea of how more advanced learners are taught to think of future tense.

Firstly, we shall take a look into Oxford's *New Headway*. The authors of this coursebook take a clear stand on the concept of future tense in their mother tongue: "There is no one future tense in English. Instead, there are several forms that can refer to future time. Sometimes they can express a similar meaning, but not always." (150) We can hardly deny that upper-intermediate learners using *New Headway* are openly told that they should not view English as a language with a genuine future tense. The authors then continue with explaining the use of different structures such as *will*, *shall*, *going to* or the Present Simple/Continuous. For the constructions *will + be doing* and *will + have done*, the traditional terms (the Future Continuous and the Future Perfect) are proposed, but they do not seem to be labelled as a tense of any kind. (152) In conclusion, *New Headway* treats English as a language with several possible ways of expressing future events, but without anything which could be seen as a proper future tense.

Another upper-intermediate coursebook which will be addressed here is *Opportunities*. The authors do not explicitly state there whether English has or does not have a tense for the future. However, there are are strong indications from which it is possible to conclude that the writers can be seen as advocates of the existence of the future tense. For instance, in the grammar section there is a part called "Tenses" in which we can learn mainly about the Present/Past Simple, Continuous and Perfect, but apart from that, short texts concerning the use of *will* and *going to* can be found in this section. (146) Although these two verb constructions are not described as a future tense, their placement into the "Tenses" part suggests that the readers ought to think that. Moreover, the issue of futurity is discussed a page later and it appears again that according to *Opportunities* there is nothing problematic about a future tense in English, since the section "Future" contains the following words: "Apart from *will/may/might* + infinitive without 'to', the Present Continuous, *to be going to* and the Present Simple, we use the following tenses and verb forms to talk about the future…" (147) These tenses and forms are revealed to be the Future Continuous, Future Perfect and Present Simple in time clauses. Again, we are not informed directly if *will + be*

doing/have done can be defined as a tense, but the words "the following tenses and verb forms" allow us to understand the Future Continuous/Perfect as examples of the English future tense. To put it differently, the *Opportunities* coursebook does not seem to hold the view that English has no future tense to speak of. Nevertheless, this is merely a speculation based on certain hints.

What does *Face2Face* for upper-intermediate students suggest about the issue of future tense? Again, it is not immediately obvious which opinion the authors support, but I believe that the truth can easily be deduced. Unlike the previous coursebook, *Face2Face* does not mention verb constructions for describing future in a section dealing with tenses. Instead, these phenomena are discussed in the section called "Future verb forms. Future Continuous" in which there is no evidence that any of these forms (the Present Simple/Continuous, *going to*, *will*, the Future Continuous) should be considered as the future tense. (125) The book also contains a shorter text devoted to several possible ways of talking about future events. The Present Continuous, Future Continuous and Future Perfect are briefly analyzed there and we would hardly find any trace of future tense in this text as well. (139) Thus, these facts allow us to conclude that although the coursebook does not explicitly reveal the approach of the authors to the notion of future tense, it still seems that they do not favour the idea of English having a proper tense for the future.

Let us now move to well-known *New English File*, the authors of which may not propose a direct answer to the question whether English grammar includes a genuine future tense, but as in the previous cases they offer an explanation from which it should be possible to deduce their point of view. It can be found in a section which describes the use of conditional sentences. I believe it will be best if the whole passage is quoted in order to understand fully the message hidden in it:

> Use first conditional (*if* + present tense, *will/won't* or *going to*, or imperative) to talk about a future possibility and its consequence. (…) Use a present tense (present simple, present continuous or present perfect) after *when*, *as soon as*, *before*, *after*, *until*, *unless* and *in case* to talk about the future (NOT *will* + infinitive). In the other part of the sentence use *will* or *going to*, or imperative. (147)

In my opinion, the fact that the authors talk about *will/ going to* in the same passage where the term "present tense" is explicitly mentioned suggests one important thing – whereas there is nothing wrong with introducing the concept of present tense into the grammar of the English language, any references to future tense should be avoided and instead of that we should name individually various forms that can be used for depicting the

future. Naturally, this is only my conclusion drawn on the basis of a text dealing with conditionals, but I do not think any other interpretation related to the existence or non-existence of future tense could be possible in this case.

Lastly, we shall end our brief insight into various coursebooks by discussing *New Inside Out*. It appears that this book does not reject the concept of the future tense – for instance, an exercise aimed at practising the Future Perfect and Continuous includes the following questions: "Which tense describes and action that will be *in progress at* a certain time in the future? Which tense describes and action that will be *completed by* a certain time in the future?" (41) If the authors had not been supporters of a future tense in English, they would have scarcely referred to the Future Continuous and Perfect as tenses. On the other hand, the grammar summary discusses means of describing future events beside other things and here no reference to future tense can be found, since this section is labelled as "Future forms and future time clauses". (136) Due to this fact, one could surely argue that *New Inside Out* does not promote the concept of future tense. Nevertheless, I believe that the questions which are quoted above serve as a proof that the very opposite is true. The authors simply did not express this opinion in the grammar summary (although they probably should have), which does not mean they do not hold it.

To sum up, three out of five discussed coursebooks evidently do not support the idea of future tense, whilst two sources seem to favour it. However, as these are mostly conclusions drawn from certain indications and therefore, we cannot be absolutely sure. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that none of the books coins the term "future tense" as such, despite the fact that *Opportunities* and *New Inside Out* appear to promote its existence. The only book to speak explicitly of this issue is *New Headway*, while the rest addressed the question of future tense rather in an indirect way.

5.2 Future tense according to online sources

In this subchapter, several web articles discussing the existence of future tense in English will be addressed. One thing must be pointed out at the very beginning – the fact that the majority of the articles reject the notion of future tense does not mean that this thesis attempts to promote this approach. The true reason lies somewhere else – it has been almost impossible to discover an article supporting the opposite point of view. Such ideas can be easily found in various discussion forums, but scarcely in the form of an article.

The first article, written in 2006 by Brett Reynolds, is taken from *English, Jack*. It is an interesting contribution created by a university teacher who shares his experience that many people feel somewhat offended at the thought that there is no future tense in their language: "A future tense seems to be some kind of mark of pride. Being told that your language doesn't have one often brings out Chauvinistic zeal in everyone from English teachers to students from Japan, Korea, Turkey, Finland, or Arab-speaking countries. 'Of course we have a future tense,' they say." (No future tense? Nonsense!) The only people who seem to have no problem with this assertion are "Chinese students, who actually tend to be rather proud that Chinese has no tenses at all." (No future tense? Nonsense!) In order not to make the reader think that no language in the world has a future tense, Reynolds adds that a great number of languages, such as Spanish, do have this tense.

The author then proposes an explanation from which it is evident that he agrees with the notion of *will* as a modal verb, not a tense auxiliary: "... ESL teachers and our materials are almost unanimous in their agreement that *will* and *(be) going to* are (is?) the future tense, despite decades of linguistic analysis telling them otherwise. Yet, it makes far more sense to teach *will* as one of the nine modals rather than teaching modals and then treating *will* seperately as a tense." (No future tense? Nonsense!) It is a shame that no materials are quoted here, for it would be interesting to know whether they really promote *be going to*, apart from *will*, as the future tense. Nevertheless, the concept of this semi-modal as a future tense marker is challenged in the article – it is stated that there is nothing special about it, since it acts in the same way as constructions such as *planning to*, *hoping to*, *intending to*. The final words prove that the author is a strong future tense opponent, indeed: "From there, it's a short hop, skip, and a jump to the idea that the present tense is often used to talk about future events, and that the past tense has meanings other than past time. Perhaps someday there will be a pedagogic ESL grammar series with no future-tense nonsense." (No future tense? Nonsense!)

The following two articles appear on *Language Log*. The first contribution was written in March 2008 by Geoffrey K. Pullum who has already been addressed several times. The author begins the text with a noteworthy anectode – when in an old church, he read an inscription saying "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY (...) WHICH WAS AND IS AND IS TO COME" (The Lord which was and is.), it ocurred to him that this very sentence could serve as a perfect example of the non-existence of future tense in English: "... the inscription intends to assert the existence of the Almighty in the past, the present, and the future. If there were a future tense of *be*, those who chose the wording would have used it. But they couldn't, because there isn't." (The Lord which was and is.) It is claimed that instead

of future tense, English speakers employ verbs such as *be, come, go, may, shall, will*, adjectival construction with *about, bound* or *certain* and idiomatic combinations with inifinitives (sadly, these do not appear to be specified) to talk about the future. Furthermore, Huddleston's assertion concerning *would* as the past form of *will* is taken into account. The author claims that not only does *will* have its past counterpart, but every construction denoting future time "can be put into the preterite (simple past) tense as well as the present tense" (The Lord which was and is.), which is naturally demonstrated on several examples.

Subsequently, the reader is assured that English is capable of denoting future time, "but the varied ways we have of referring to future time in English are not part of the tense system; they involve a significant-sized array of idioms and periphrastic work-arounds (...) and the modal verb *will* has no particularly privileged place in that array." (The Lord which was and is.) Surprisingly, this is actually the first time we can see the apt word 'periphrastic' being used by a future tense opponent. The article is concluded by a large table which shows that "*will* has a wide range of meanings, ranging over volition, inclination, habituation, tendency, inference, and prediction." (The Lord which was and is.) This serves a final piece of evidence that *will* ought not to be considered a future tense carrier.

The second *Language Log* article was written by Mark Liberman in December 2008 and it is actually a response to a female teacher who (along with her students) felt confused by a grammar text which contained these words: "The nice thing about modern grammarians is that they have reduced the number of TENSES in English to just two, PRESENT and PAST. Notice even WILL (...) is really A PRESENT TENSE MODAL expressing present time intent or will..." (What's will?) Liberman admits that it is convenient to consider sentences such as *we like, we liked* and *we'll like* to be examples of the past, present and future tense, but he emphasizes that "from a syntactic point of view, *will* is used in the same way as the class of words generally called 'modal auxiliaries', such as *can, may, might, must, should* and *would*." (What's will?) Moreover, a closer look at the use of *will* suggests that this modal verb does not really denote future time, but rather "has the same sort of relationship to time-meanings that (for example) may does." (What's will?) Unfortunately, this statement is not verified by any concrete example. A lengthy explanation regarding the modality of *will* follows and it must be noted that these passages are based on Huddleston and Pullum's text discussed in subchapter 4. 7.

Interestingly, the author challenges the claim that modern linguists allegedly reduced the number of tenses – these grammarians have actually "argued that English has had only two tenses all along, going back to the time before it was even called 'English'." (What's

will?) Liberman also casts doubt upon the assertion that *will* marks present intent or will – it may have done so in the past, but the modern English rarely employs *will* in such a way. What is interesting, the previously discussed article is quoted in this context – specifically Huddleston's words about *will* having 'a wide range of meanings'.

The last article against an English future tense which will be discussed appears at *Colourless Green Linguistics*. The text was written in 2014 and the name of the author does not seem to be provided. The writer firstly speaks of tenses in general, claiming that they "tend to apply to verbs in a language and cause sentences and perceptions to move about in time." (Tense time – more on manipulating time.) It is subsequently stated that there is no tense for future in English, which the author tries to prove on the basis of inflection. It is shown that the infinitive usually changes into something else in the case of the present and past tense, and the contrast is made regarding the future:

> What inflection, if any, is added to the verb to indicate that it is referring to a future event? (...) Instead of adding an inflection, English uses another word (in this case, the modal verb "will") to indicate that this event is something future-bound. It is because of this requirement to use a supporting verb that many believe that, grammatically, English has no future tense. (Tense time – more on manipulating time.)

For some reason the author focuses only on *will* and does not mention other constructions used for future time. It is noteworthy that the morphological point of view is supported by examples from other languages – firstly from those which do inflect verbs to mark the future and therefore we can speak of future tense in these cases (French, Spanish) and then the author mentions languages which according to him do not have a genuine future tense. Japan and Chinese are addressed here, but arguably the most beneficial example is German, which "can use the modal verb 'werden' and the infinitive to form the future (very similar to the 'will' seen above for English) or by using a marker of time in a present tense sentence." (Tense time – more on manipulating time.) Thus, readers can have a better idea of what it means if verbs inflect, or do not inflect in order to denote future time.

The only article favouring the idea of future tense to be addressed in this subchapter was written in 2010 in by Jose A. Carillo, a Philippine teacher and presumably not a native speaker of English. Interestingly the author admits that English "verbs can't inflect or change in form for the future tense." (The six ways that English reckons with the future.) However, this fact does not mean that we cannot speak of future tense as such – according to the author there are six future forms in English and "the choice among these future-tense forms primarily depends on which part of the future is important to us or to those telling us about it. This

obviously makes it manyfold more complicated for learners to master the English future tense." (The six ways that English reckons with the future.) The lack of inflection is subsequently referred to once more and this time Carillo shortly discusses the Tagalog language with its inflectional future tense and assumes that the non-existence of such inflection is as if the ancient Angles, "too preoccupied perhaps with settling in what is now England after crossing the channel from the European mainland, never found the need or the time to work out the future tense into their verbs." (The six ways that English reckons with the future.) It is unfortunately pure speculation based on no historical data.

Let us now see what these six future tense forms are said to be. Firstly there are *the simple future tense* ('will do') and *the future perfect tense* ('will have done'). The other forms are introduced by words from which it is even more evident that in no way does the author reject the notion of future tense: "English then dealt with the future tense even more purposively by coming up with four more grammatical stratagems to express it, in the process making its future tense more complicated than that of some other languages with elaborate future-tense inflections built into their verbs." (The six ways that English reckons with the future.) The remaining forms are called *the arranged future/present continuous*, *the predicted future*, *the timetable future/present simple* and *the described future/future continuous*. Apart from *the arranged future*, these forms are not further discussed in the article, which was probably caused by the fact that the text seems to be only an extract from Carillo's book *Give Your English the Winning Edge*. Nevertheless, the main message is evident even from this short Internet contribution – English may not inflect for future, but the language still has a proper future tense (marked not merely by *will*) which can be viewed as more complex than in those languages who have inflectional tenses for future time.

Although online sources were not meant to play a crucial role in this thesis, I believe they still provide a great number of interesting thoughts. The most frequently appearing arguments are undoubtedly modal features of *will* and the lack of inflection, which was surprisingly repeated many times even in the case of Carillo who is a future tense defender. In addition, noteworthy parallels with other languages seem to be more typical for online sources – concerning grammar books, we have seen this only once with Huddleston's book from 1984.

Conclusion

The previous pages have shown that for several decades both the existence and non-existence of future tense has been proposed in grammar books and other sources, which is arguably not a surprising fact at all. Nevertheless, a much more interesting conclusion can be drawn from the observed data – the last book which evidently supports the existence of future tense was written in 1993, while all sources published in the second half of the 1990s and after 2000 undoubtedly reject this idea. Naturally, I am not claiming that there are no grammar books advocating the English future tense from the last twenty years – there certainly are and will be. However, the fact that the selection of grammar books discussed in this thesis does not include any recent proponent of future tense certainly is not a coincidence and it shows that the 'traditional' notion of the past, present and future tense is becoming less and less popular and it is being replaced by the idea that English may have different constructions for describing future events, but it cannot be thought of as a language with a proper future tense. In addition, it has been proven that three out of five upper-intermediate coursebooks and the majority of addressed online sources appear to reject future tense in English. This fact definitely strengthens the feeling that nowadays the existence of future tense is promoted significantly less than it used to be.

Although it would be unwise to speak of definite consensus among linguists, it seems that the majority of today's scholars who are familiar with the issue of tense hold the view that there is only the past and present tense, which is surely an important thing to remember. While the arguments for rejecting future tense differ from one book to another (inflection, *will* as a modal auxiliary, other future forms besides *will*), the crucial message given by these sources is identical: teachers and learners of English ought to forget about the term 'future tense', as it does not belong to English grammar.

Seeing that the rejection of future tense appears to be an indisputable trend in the study of English grammar, is it possible to deduce any ideas from it? It certainly is. I personally believe that when learners are taught about the 'futurity *will*' (or other ways of marking the future in English), they should be told from the very beginning – provided they are at least a little familiar with the grammatical category of tense – that many scholars do not favour the idea of calling this a future tense. It should be up to the teacher whether he or she wants to use the term 'future tense' – if I were one, I would probably attempt to avoid using such a term, but some teachers may certainly feel that it is the 'traditional approach' that ought to be followed. The reason why I assert that learners should be aware of the 'modern approach'

even though the teacher does not approve of it is simple – it has been demonstrated that the refusal of future tense has become a clearly visible phenomenon in today's linguistics. If teachers ignore this fact completely, they do not behave as professionals, for it is certainly a part of the teacher's job to reflect thoughts and findings recently published by scholars. And what is more, I believe that if learners are told about the non-existence of future tense and one or more arguments for this approach is provided to them, this can surely raise their awareness of how the language works, which can be only beneficial for them.

Needless to say, if a teacher is a strong opponent of the idea of future tense, his or her learners still should be informed that there is an approach according to which English is treated as a language with the past, present and future tense. Even though this idea does not seem to be as prominent as in the past, it has not disappeared and has undoubtedly played an important role in English linguistics.

All in all, allowing for both approaches is, I believe, the ideal way of teaching the future in English, as there still is not clear consensus among scholars, no matter how much the theory of two-tense system is becoming more and more prevailing and is likely to be viewed as the only right notion in the future. Naturally, it may happen that the 'traditional grammar' will once experience its renaissance and the three-tense distinction will extensively be promoted once again. However, the data contained in this thesis indicate that this probably will not be the case. To put it differently: the recent trends in the study of grammar suggest that the future has no place for the future tense.

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